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ADDRESS GIVEN AT OPENING OF NEW LIBRARY BUILDING AT RADCLIFFE
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, APRIL 27, 1908
By John Shaw Billings, M.D., LL.D., &c, Director New York
Public Library.

The pleasures of pursuit, as compared with those of possession, have been the subject of many unreported debates, and of a considerable amount of literature. You have had the pleasures of anticipation in the long and strenuous efforts which have been made to secure this new library building, and, now, at last, it is completed, and you can go on to realize the plans which have been the object of your imagination and desire.

I am specially pleased to see that the library purpose of the building has been the only object you have had in view, in its plan and construction. Thanks to Mr. Carnegie, it has been easier in recent years to obtain a library building than almost any other sort of building for colleges in this country, and to many it has seemed quite natural and proper to provide for as many other college needs in such a building as possible, and, in fact, there are few of the intellectual needs of a college which cannot be shown, at least theoretically, to depend on, or to be closely connected with, the library.

The most important part of a library is, of course, the books, and of these you already have a good supply, which will, no doubt, be largely increased by the fact that you now have a suitable home for them. One of the best mottoes for a library is "unto him that hath shall be given."

A common method in preparing an address for an occasion like this is to begin by saying that this new addition to your resources brings with it increased duties and responsibilities and then proceed to give a few thousand words of advice. I could do this without great trouble, for I should not be hampered with knowledge of the con-

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ditions and modes of work in the college which affect the library. It is the bachelor who advises most freely as to how a man should treat his wife and the spinster as to how children should be brought up.

Nearly all of the eulogistic addresses about libraries which have been printed in recent years relate to public libraries, and especially circulating libraries, intended for the use and benefit of the great mass of the people, and in many respects do not apply to the scholars' library such as you have here.

It would be interesting to compare this library with other college libraries of about the same size, in order to ascertain what the differences, if any, in the character of the books, and the principles which govern their selection. For example, does the library of a college for young men differ from that of a college for young women, and if so, how? (Observe that I do not ask, "Why?")

Of course, every college library differs from every other college library, depending on the character and tastes of the founders and of those who select the books for purchase, the special purposes of the institution, the nature of the gifts made to the library, etc. Of course, also, there are several thousand books that will be found in every college library of 10,000 volumes or more, including the ordinary reference books, such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries, standard histories, biographies and fiction, text books in the different branches of science, sets of certain periodicals, etc., also the so-called books of power, the sacred books, works of the great poets and dramatists, etc. But are there any considerable number of books which will usually be found in the man's college library and not in the woman's, or vice versa? Perhaps the college librarians who are

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here to-day might contribute to the world's stock of knowledge on this point. Mr. McGrould, librarian of the University of Minnesota, proposed in 1906 a plan for the compilation of comparative university and college library statistics ¹, and a committee of the American Library Association was appointed to carry out this plan. This committee made a preliminary report in 1907², but it gives no information on the question which I have suggested.

So far as I know there is no difference between the libraries of men's and women's colleges intended for general education only, and having no preparatory courses for special technical instruction, but I will refer to this later.

A library has often been compared to a laboratory for purposes of research work. There is one likeness between them, which is seldom referred to, but to which I would call your special attention, and that is that both are liable to become overcrowded with useless material, and to have difficulties in the disposal of their waste products.

For a research in the laboratory special apparatus must often be obtained, but when this apparatus has been used for its particular purpose, it is often of no further value, except, perhaps, as for deposit in a museum as a bit of history. The great majority of books lose all their vitality in ten years, many of them never had any vitality to lose.

There is always a possibility that a book which seems useless, such as an old City Directory, or an old text book, may be useful to

¹ Library Journal, Nov. 1906, v. 31, p. 761

² Papers and Proceedings of the 29th annual meeting of the American Library Association, 1907, p. 261

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some future student, and the motive of Mrs. Toodles for buying a door plate bearing the name of Brown because she (Mrs. Toodles), might have a daughter, and that daughter might marry a man named Brown "and then it would be so handy to have that door plate in the house" is one that appeals to some professors as well as to some librarians.

A public library necessarily accumulates much rubbish, flavorless, namby, pamby, ^{tedious} stuff, - hash without salt, which one might suppose would never find a reader. But certain publishers know very well that there is a demand for this sort of thing, and the librarian must remember that he is managing a large public mental restaurant, and he must be prepared to give toast water, and broth without salt, to some of his customers, although if they demand raw, trichinous pork, or excessively gamey birds, he can say that his supplies of these articles have not yet arrived. I have said that the character of a library depends on those who select the books. When young physicians prescribe a certain diet for their patients they are ^{very} apt to be influenced by their personal likes and dislikes, and even an old physician with a poor digestion, (which sometimes appears in old doctors), is sometimes too much guided by his own appetites.

Radcliffe is the only woman's college I know of where all the instruction is given by men, and by men who are professors or teachers in a University for men. Its library has been for the most part selected by these men, each recommending the books considered as most desirable for the student for reference work in the branch of study which he teaches. It is, therefore, almost entirely a reference library, but is very little used by the teachers themselves and probably contains nothing that would not be found in a man's college library of the same size. It will accumulate some rubbish, but slowly, unless it comes in

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by gifts. There is generally a bad side to good things and this applies especially to gifts of books to libraries if accompanied by restrictions as to their disposal.

As the Harvard University Library is available for research purposes to the teachers and students of this college, and as that library follows the plan of accumulating and preserving every book or pamphlet that comes to it without cost, it seems clear that the policy of this library should be to transfer its dead and dying books to Harvard to be properly embalmed and registered.

A library may also be likened to a garden in which one may wander, picking the flowers and fruit which seem attractive, or in which one may try to produce some new beauties or utilities by combinations or eliminations of certain characters of what is already there. But the garden must be kept properly weeded if it is to be a success.

The old army proverb that "no amount of too short bed will make a man comfortable" applies to the library in which one cannot find the information desired, but in many cases the book or article which the research student wants has never been written, or at all events, printed. I found this to be the case in my enquiry as to the differences between the libraries of women's colleges and those of men's colleges to which I have just referred.

If you do not find in your garden the special combination of pineapple and potato which you have in mind, remember that you will probably not find it in any garden, and that you can have the pleasure of trying to produce it yourself and thus contribute to the joy of nations. Sometimes too much research gives unsatisfactory results, as when you find that the subject on which you wish to give an address has been entirely covered by others.

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The library may also be likened to a gymnasium, in that it is a place where the intellectual and emotional faculties may be exercised and trained. Here one may learn how to master the parallel bars of memory, to take the long jump to conclusions, see how the world looks upside down without becoming giddy, to use the flying trapeze of imagination without bumping against ^{too} serious obstacles of fact. Here, also, one may train and cultivate one's sense of beauty, or one's appreciation of the funny side of life, or may compare what the wisest and best men of all countries and of all times have thought and said about obligations and duties, and about that which lies beyond the veil. One may find here the materials for a course of soul massage, but as a rule this should not be used for this purpose, at all events, before one is fifty years old. Self hypnotization is a dangerous business. Genuine emotion is a powerful force but it is not wise to waste it, or to seek for means of arousing it merely as a source of pleasure or as a means of passing the time. Emotionalism is somewhat like alcoholism, it produces weakening or loss of the normal powers of judgment and of will, and indicates an unbalanced nervous system, which at first may be only slight and temporary, but which, as a habit, may become pernicious.

For some people the library is like the flying carpet of Arabian story, with an improvement which enables it to transport you not only to other countries but to other times, and even to countries and times which have never yet existed.

The mind can travel when the body cannot, and by means of books it can face glaciers, and deserts, and savages with impunity,-- it can ramble through Rome, or lounge in the Islands of the South Pacific,-- it can "go afishing" with Walton, or Van Dyke,-- it can look in at the new excavations in Nippur, or Egypt, or Crete, or get a view

or the Mississippi from a pilot house with Mark Twain, or of the effects of the driver ants of West Africa with Miss Kingsley, or of the shooting experiences of the "Two Dianas in Somaliland" with Agnes Herbert. Arcady, or Atlantis, or Utopia may be viewed in an hour,- you may see the ashes sifting down on Pompeii, or the banners waving in the lists of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, or the black draped streets of Washington the morning after the assassination of Lincoln.

When I was in college fifty years ago, the Library was not recognized as a part of the system of instruction. No professor ever referred the students to it, or suggested any use of the books in it. It contained about 15,000 volumes, and was open on Saturday mornings from 9 to 12. Each student could borrow two books, many of them did not borrow any, and I always found it easy to get half a dozen students to give me permission to borrow for them, so that I usually left with as many books as I could conveniently carry.

During the long summer vacations I used to make a burglarious entrance into the library by an attic trap door, a climb over the roof, etc., and then I had long hours of enjoyment. I had no wise librarian to guide me,- I simply tried every book on the shelves, skimming and skipping through the majority, and really reading those which interested me, and if there had been a librarian there I should have carefully kept away. Mr. Frederic Harrison declares that this sort of miscellaneous reading gorges and enfeebles the intellect so that it cannot properly develop. On the other hand, Mr. Arthur Schopenhauer says that Mr. Harrison has no evidence to prove this. (1) "It is true no doubt

(1) The pleasures of reading, by A. J. Schopenhauer. Edinburgh, 1888, p. 14.

that many learned people are dull; but there is no indication that they are dull because they are learned. True dullness is seldom acquired; it is a natural grace. Fill a dull man to the brim with knowledge and he will not become less dull as the enthusiasts for education vainly imagine; neither will he become duller, as Mr. Harrison appears to suppose*** But whereas his dullness would, if left to itself, have been merely vacuous, it may have become, under careful cultivation pretentious and pedantic."

I cannot tell whether my example supports the view of Mr. Harrison or of Mr. Salfour, all I can say is that my experience in the college library has been very useful to me, and that I still skim and skip more than three thousand books a year to my own pleasure, if not for others' benefit.

I give this personal note in order that you may understand, and make allowances for, the special point of view from which I am about to consider the possible uses of this library.

When we consider what this library may, or should, be to the students of this college, - to the young women, - the young ladies, - the girls, - if there are any girls here, it seems clear that only a very few general statements can be made.

It is intended to be a source of information on every subject in which they should be interested, but it should also be a source of pleasure in which every one, in any mood, can find something which will interest her, which will seem as if it had been expressly written for her, which will advise her when in doubt, be restful when she is tired, amuse and stimulate her when she is languid and bored.

No one student will require many books for all these purposes, but no two students will want the same books, so that the library will require a considerable stock to supply all needs.

that every father's rights are being put down in the hands of the State
and will become the property of the State. The children in their infancy
it is a matter of course. Still a child has to be able to know
and he will not receive any help in his education for everything which
is important to him will be taken away from him. The children are to be
supposed to be the property of the State, if left to itself, have been
severely punished, it has been found, that every child is a creature of
fear and obedience.

I cannot tell whether or not the State is to be
considered as the owner, but I am sure it is to be considered as the
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But, the student will perhaps say, How am I to find the books I want, when I don't even know what they are or who wrote them?—How am I to find in this wilderness garden the particular flower or fruit which will suit me, when I may not know it when I see it? That brings up the question of "How to use a library," a subject which ought to receive more attention than it does in schemes of university and college instruction. A graduate of Radcliffe ought to know what are the best reference books, encyclopaedias, bibliographies, anthologies, etc., and in particular those which best serve her special needs. These are books to be used as tools, not to be read. She ought to know how to begin a research in almost any branch of history, literature, philosophy, or theology, and in the special branches of science, applied science or art in which she is interested.

All these are matters in which instruction can be usefully given by methods well known, and which are not difficult to understand. The important thing in this, as in other branches of education, is to find out how the student can be made to want to learn about it.

Hesiod's classification of men, no doubt, applies also to the students in this college — there are those who understand of themselves the use and pleasure of books, there are those who can understand and appreciate these things when they are explained to them, and there are those who can neither understand them of themselves nor when they are explained to them. For the first and ^{the} last of these three classes, the librarian can do little, but for the second class it is possible to do much.

Of course, to find a name in a directory you must know how to spell it, and if you do not know the name of the author or the title of the book, or its subject, the quest is a little difficult.

Yet, in a certain way, this indicates a part of the information which the educated woman should have acquired in the college library. She needs to know what are the hundred or so best books for her, the books which she will wish to own and have always with her, the books which are to be her companions and friends. She cannot learn this from bibliographies, or from catalogues, or from professors, she must find them out by actual trial, by continued browsing among books old and new.

In talking with graduates of several of the leading women's colleges in this country, I have found that they knew little about the library beyond the particular reference and collateral reading books which they had used. They did not seem to have wandered about the library testing and tasting a book here and there. They said when they were in the library they had no time for anything but reference work, and that for their own leisure reading in their rooms, they got books from other libraries. They did not know whether the library contained any books specially intended for women, or not.

This seemed to me to indicate something lacking somewhere, but whether it was in the girl, or in the character of the books in the college library, or in the methods used to induce the students to use the library, I do not know.

I have alluded to the fact that no difference s seem to exist between the libraries of colleges for men and of those for women. To use the words of a librarian "There is no flavor of the exclusively feminine attaching itself to the library of a woman's college any more than to the curriculum." So far as the literature relating to the curriculum is concerned, this may be well, but when it comes to providing browsing ground where the girls may find out what are the books which they want for their very own, it seems possible

that a little flavor of the exclusively feminine might be desirable.

I should like to see in every college library a browsing corner, not arranged according to the decimal, or the progressive, or any other system of classification, which should be what Mr. Balfour describes as a "peaceful desert of literature as yet unclaimed by tutors or coaches, where it might be possible for the student to wander, even perhaps to stray, at her own pleasure without finding every beauty labelled, every difficulty engineered, every nook surveyed."

This browsing corner should contain no book associated with memories of study, and no book recommended by any professor for reference or for collateral reading. I could make some suggestions for a few of these books for a man's college, - such as books on sport, or travels with a large sporting element, or life in the woods, the history of flat land, Montaigne, the history of magic of Eliphas Levi, Lavengro and the Romany Rye, a set of Punch, and of Puck, etc.

For the browsing corner of the woman's college library I think it wise to make no specific suggestions, but I should place in it a few of the best illustrations of the taste of women at different times and in different countries in matters of applied art.

According to the catalogue of this library it contains no book on lace, or on tapestry, but I would admit a few books of this kind to the browsing corner, which should also contain a special selection of biographies and fiction and of the latest poetry. I should give the students an opportunity of seeing in the browsing corner, some of the newest books, and for this purpose the method adopted in some clubs seems a good one. For example, in the Century Association of New York, there are always six of the latest books on the table. These books are furnished by subscription to a circulating library, and are changed every two weeks. One of them is usually a novel, the

others are books of travel, and sport, essays, biographies, etc., books that are being noticed in the daily and weekly press; they are much used but seldom read through.

A lady of great experience in library management to whom I mentioned this browsing corner idea, highly approved of it and went on to suggest that two or three rocking chairs and an upholstered window seat with plenty of sofa pillows would improve it. I think they would.

In his book on the private library⁽¹⁾ Mr. Humphreys has a section on "Boudoir libraries," which begins "Women have their own way of loving books." This is probably true, just as they have their own way, (in several senses) about most things. The greater part of this section is devoted to the bindings which are appropriate for a boudoir library and closes with the essay "On my lady's library," given in the Spectator. I suppose you all remember it. Elsewhere he says that every bed room should have a book case, and that house maids are seldom bibliophiles.

If I only knew what books, or what kinds of books, each of you will have in her own library twenty five years from now, I could prepare an address which would be of great interest to historians and sociologists. But I can only say that the character of your private libraries will depend much on the manner in which you have used this library.

Owing to the wide diffusion of public library facilities, and perhaps for other reasons, men do not now accumulate books for their private use to the extent that they used to do. They do, not, as a rule have as much affection for their books, they have not given as much time, and trouble, and sacrifice to obtain certain books as their

(1) Humphreys, Arthur L. The private library. What we do know, what we don't know, what we ought to know about our books, N.Y. Bost., 1897.

grandfathers did. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes used to say that there was an invisible thread connecting each book in his library with his heart and brain, and that it was cruel to ask him to part with any of his treasures merely because they would be more useful in a general library.

I have said little about the practical utilities of books or of libraries. In this library are gathered the most important records of the world's memory, of the progress of man from the days when Accad ruled the land between the rivers and the first dynasty was building in the valley of the Nile.

The dreams and hopes, the joys and sorrows, the sayings and doings of the wisest men of all times and of all countries are gathered here, and it is from these that our teachers, our legislators and our people must draw the stores and weapons with which to contend with the same ignorance, indolence, folly and vice which have led to the downfall of the kingdoms and cities of long ago. "In this library there are also suggestions as to beautiful and as to unpleasant things in this world of which it is difficult to see the use. Of such are the Aurora, and the hidden anemone which no one sees, and the grief for the loss of a dear one, mother or child. There is no unit of measure for the utility of these things," but they are necessary.

I have no doubt that you have all heard of the "Philobiblon of Richard de Bury" and that some of you have read this eloquent appeal for the collection and preservation of books. He says "We must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret ! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame! They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words,*** if you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and enquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves *** They do not laugh at you if you are ignorant.

"O books, who alone are liberal and free*** ye are the wells of living waters*** the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain;*** fig trees that are never barren, lamps always in readiness."

It should be observed, however, that the learned bishop meant these eulogies chiefly for old books or what he calls "the well tested labours of the Ancients," of whom he says that "whether they had by nature a greater vigour of mental sagacity, or whether they perhaps indulged in closer application to study*** one thing we are pretty clear about, that their successors are barely capable of discussing the discoveries of their forerunners."

We have no list of the large collection of books and manuscripts which he made, but it is probable that very few of them would be read if they were in our libraries, and I think this would also apply to a considerable number of the hundred best books named by Lord Acton. We can, all of us, however, join in the eulogy of de Bury, with the simple qualification that for us it applies to our books, the books which we know and love.

It is, perhaps, well that in your student life you should not be oppressed by too keen a sense of the responsibilities which will weigh upon you as women in the coming years. These responsibilities will relate mainly to what you can and should do for the benefit of others. Much of what you are now learning in order to pass examination will, for the most part of you, be soon forgotten because you will have no occasion to use it, but the sources of this information and the methods of finding and using these sources you will not forget. If you have acquired in this library the knowledge as to what books interest

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